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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE

February 17, 1956

AIR MAIL

Dr. Alan Gregg
Big Sur, California

Dear Dr. Gregg:

I do want to thank you again and most sincerely for your kindness in spending the time you did with us the other day. We found your contribution to our thinking of the utmost value.

After you left, Jack Forsythe and I discussed your plan to write to the editors of various journals urging them to lend editorial support to the Hill-Kennedy bill. It occurred to us that if such letters are to be really effective they had best be written just as soon as possible and without waiting for the bill to be introduced. Should you agree and undertake to write such letters, if you were to send us a list of those to whom they were addressed we could mail the same people -- "At Dr. Gregg's request" -- copies of the bill as soon as it was in print. Since, as you know, most journals are set up a month or two before actual publication it occurred to us that it might be desirable to so alert the editors so that they might perhaps be willing to save space for such an editorial as you are suggesting and get it in as early an edition as possible. I think this is particularly desirable inasmuch as the greatest value such editorials in professional journals might have would result from their stimulating the writing of editorials in the regular lay press. Whereas members of the Congress might not be particularly influenced by an editorial in a, to them, more or less obscure professional journal, they do respond to editorials appearing in their own home town newspapers. I would hope that your letters would result in the editors of the professional journals advising their readers somewhat along the following lines:

Whenever men of medicine feel it urgently necessary, in the interests of the public good and their own profession, to strongly oppose proposed legislation (as in the case of the socialized medicine bill) they have no hesitation in approaching the editors of local newspapers, explaining the situation to them as they see it and urging that the local editors write editorials in opposition to such bills. This is well and good and as it should be. It has, however, one serious drawback. To date it has undeniably left in the public mind an impression that men of medicine are always opposing legislative attempts to act in the field of health.

Now medicine has a chance to again do a worthwhile job and at the same time to correct that impression. Here is a bill -- the Hill-Kennedy bill to create a National Library of Medicine -- which every professional person in the country should and will wholeheartedly support. Instead of telling one another about the fact that we endorse this bill, let us on this occasion do as we have done in the past. Let us go to the editors of our local papers and just as vigorously explain the reasons why they should join us in urging its prompt passage. Let us take this opportunity of showing the press, the public and our legislators that we can be just as vigorous in advancing the cause of sound legislation in the field of health as we are in opposing measures which we believe would adversely affect the public's health.

If such a sequence (Gregg to professional editor, publication date, receipt by professional audience, approach to lay editor, publication of lay editorial, communication of same to members of Congress) is to happen in time to produce optimum results, I think you will agree that it were best initiated immediately.

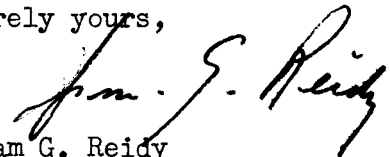
We make this suggestion hesitantly and with full consciousness that there may be many and excellent reasons why you might well decide it to be ill-advised. In that case, please just forget it and don't take the time to comment on it.

The bill is now being redrafted by our legislative counsel along the lines which we discussed. We would hope that he will have it ready for the Senators to review not later than midweek next.

I am attaching hereto the list of members of the Armed Services Committees, which you requested.

Again our most sincere thanks, both for your help and for the sense of enthusiasm concerning this bill which you have managed to inspire in all of us.

Sincerely yours,



William G. Reidy
Professional Staff Member

Enclosure

WGR:hp

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